

Title: Interview with Charlene Fields

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Location: Shiloh United Methodist Church

Interviewer(s): Christian Ottey and Christopher Knorr

Interviewee: Charlene Fields

Introduction: Charlene Fields was born and raised in Crisfield and had worked in the crab houses when she was a kid with her parents. She left for a while but came back to take care of her mother. She works for the school systems It Takes a Village and wants to see more opportunity for the youth in Crisfield.

[Transcription begins]

Christian Ottey (Ottey): Yeah. Now we're good. Alright, so the day is April 18th, 2025. My name is Christian Ottey and we're here with...

Charlene Fields (Fields): Charlene Fields.

Chrisptoper Knorr (Knorr): And I'm Christopher Knorr, and we are at the Shiloh United Methodist Church.

Ottey: Let's go ahead and get started here, so we're just going to start from the list here. And we'll probably have some follow-up questions based on the information that you give us. So how long have you lived in the Crisfield area?

Fields: All my life.

Ottey: So you were born here?

Fields: Yeah, born and raised here. Well, some years ago, back in 1975, went to Baltimore for a few years and came back home in 1980. [pauses] Let's see, I think I went, like, in 1980, and I came back, like 1985. Because my kids [inaudible]. They want to come home, so I brought them home.

Knorr: What would you say has kept you in the Crisfield area?

Fields: Well, my family. Basically, my family. Wanted to be close to my mom so.

Ottey: What was growing up in Crisfield like? How was your childhood like?

Fields: My childhood?

Ottey: I know that's a very broad question, but yeah.

Fields: It must have been like 60 some years ago. My childhood was pretty good, I think. I, I mean, I was born and raised here, so, you know. I think when I, when I was young, I mean, we did a lot of stuff outside, played and stuff, and I had a lot of family and friends. We all lived in this little neighborhood together, family and friends and stuff, and I love to hear them. We got to do a lot of things that some of the kids don't even do now so.

Knorr: Would you say that some of the times growing up with your family and doing all that stuff are some of your most cherished memories in Crisfield or what do you cherish most?

Fields: I cherish most about, just being- being able to spend time with my family and my friends and stuff and not, you know, we all got along, we played together, cried together, we did a lot of things together as coming up, coming up. We didn't get to go over very many places, but we were comfortable where we, where, you know, I was comfortable where I was at.

Knorr: Would you say that a lot of the kind of water was kind of a lot of the recreation around here? Did you guys play in the water a lot?

Fields: Yeah, we played in the water a lot, a lot, all the time. Now, it's different now, but back then we didn't think about, oh, we know the water was up and we didn't have to go to school and we were going to be out there playing in it. That's how we felt about it, that's how I felt about the water. We loved, I love the water, I still can't swim, but I love it. We'd be out playing in the water, we'd catch little minnows and do all that kind of, it was fun stuff for us.

Ottey: So do you think that's maybe an aspect that's kind of missing from the youth in Crisfield now, or is that something that's just not a thing for them to really do anymore in Crisfield?

Fields: Yeah, it's not- it's not a thing, but they wouldn't, this generation wouldn't know how to deal with that. They wouldn't know how to deal with that because right now I don't know how to do deal with it because it's changed from when it was back then. Back then it was just like the tide would just come up and would just be water. We didn't say about this flooding, we just thought about this, the tide's coming up today, the tides up and down, you know, but now it's like flooding, flooding, there's more to this coming.

Ottey: Maybe it's a lot more extreme.

Fields: Yeah, it was a lot more extreme now than what it was then, you know.

Knorr: Is that one of the things that you've noticed most about the change in Crisfield is kind of the it's now what you would describe as flooding overly?

Fields: It's a lot different from what it was when we were coming up. I'm like. When Sandy came, that just took me to a whole 'nother level above water. I mean, I was, I was actually scared. I was actually scared, you know. Back then it, when we were little in the tides, we weren't scared. We were just, you know, there was something that's for us to do and play. Because we couldn't go anywhere, and we couldn't do anything. But when Sandy came, it just kind of like, it really scared me. It was it was a lot different.

Ottey: If you can, could you tell us a bit more about Hurricane Sandy?

Fields: Well, let me tell you about Hurricane Sandy or whatever. But we always have these warnings about flooding coming up, being prepared and stuff like that, and which we were on top of this if anything. But then when Sandy came and then, and then when you got prepared, nothing happened. You know, nothing really happened, so I think a lot of us let our guard down a little bit because we didn't really think anything was going to happen, and it, and but it just came and it just came and that's like scared me to death, it scared me to death. I didn't know what to do. I mean the water just came so fast. I thought the Lord had opened up the river. I'm going to tell you, this because it's the truth. I'm serious, it scared me so bad because it was like, you know, a split-second thing. I knew my mom was across the street, but I stayed, I stayed on this little street over here. So my mom was across this street. I live on the other side of the street, right? So, you know, I was trying to get stuck together to try to get over there with her. And it was, I was just moving so fast. I thought I would have a heart attack. By the time I got down, because I had a two-story house, she had a two-story house, by the time I got downstairs, when I started to go over to my mom's, the water was already- already in my house. I had to sit, when I stepped down on to my steps, and that water was all the way up into me, in my house. It scared me to death, but I, you know, it was- it was something. It was awful. I wouldn't wish that on nobody, I mean, and I just felt so sorry for the older people, the real older people that couldn't really get out, you know, because I didn't, I don't think that I know I didn't think it was going to be that bad, and I don't think really think the people in Crisfield know it was going to be that bad either, so.

Knorr: Yeah, you kind of said that you would prepare a little bit and then you had how would you or how do you prepare for like bad flooding events now? What are the typical things that you do?

Fields: Honey, when they say, look, when they say you just pack a bag, make sure you got all your stuff and your paperwork and all that kind of stuff. Make sure you have all that stuff that's sealed up and stuff. Make sure your pack a bag or whatever. And if you have, if you have a vehicle or whatever, if they say move your vehicle, move your vehicle, I will take my stuff and put it in my vehicle. So I- I wouldn't have to try to, you know. But like my personal stuff, my bible and stuff, I would have some stuff in there that I could actually carry with me. But as for other things and stuff, I would have it packed up in my car and move my car to a safe space or

whatever like that. And then just, just go try to find somewhere else to stay other than where, where you at. See, my uncle stays up on the highway so he's up a little bit further on up the road, so we were trying to get up there, but we couldn't even get up there for Sandy. We couldn't- we couldn't even get out, you know. The trucks had to come and pick us up, the army trucks and stuff, put them in it, you know. But I wound up, my mom and I were wound up staying in the house because we couldn't, because the water was just or something, [inaudible] something, the trucks couldn't get through no more, so we had to wound up staying, in the house we looked like something. But I did, I had all my, I had my phones and stuff charged up. I had my chargers, I had my laptop and stuff, you know, so I could actually, you know, least try to some kind of communication, in case I can hear something, you know, like that. I have my little kit now, honey. I got my little kit. I got my stuff, I got my stuff packed up now. I got all my emergency stuff. I've got water. I've got paper towel, I've got stuff them and stuff like that, packed up right now. In case something happens, I can go.

Ottey: So what are the, some of the things, I know you just talked about, the things that you do to prepare individually, but what are some of the things that the community does to try and help other people prepare for these floods? Or maybe when a flooding event does happen, what's their response?

Fields: Well, I mean they'll try to, they'll, but they'll, the city will try to make sure that the people can get out safely before it happens. They'll make arrangements. If you don't have transportation or something, they'll make arrangements for you, you know, to get transportation to get you to a safer place, you know. But, you know, then we got, well I, we have a lot of family around here, so most of the family members, if they have older people, they'll make sure that their parents or whatever get out to a safer place before, you know. But if, but the city will help, will help. They're willing to help to make sure that the people get to safety.

Knorr: Kind of going back a little bit to what you're saying about how you've seen the change of the flooding and everything, how- would you say that that's affected your kind of daily life? Like before you used to, when you were a child, I guess it was just sort of playing in the water. Now it's that more distinct flooding, would you say that has affected your daily life or?

Fields: Sort of, I think so a little bit, because, the flooding has taken away a lot, a lot of stuff, like this was the seafood capital of the world. I mean, you know, it was plentiful, fish, crabs, oysters. I mean it was just plentiful. And since the flooding has come, I think everything is just like it's washed away, like it's been washed away with somewhere else, you know. This is very, very hard. And I think that it's the flooding had to put, put a big change in this.

Ottey: So you'd say that flooding has had a really big impact on like the seafood industry around Crisfield?

Fields: Yeah, it has.

Ottey: So, what, if you know, what are some of the things that businesses do to try and, I guess, maybe make the best out of flooding scenarios or how do they maybe prepare for floods or how do they respond to floods?

Fields: All the businesses is dead. Well, we don't have that many businesses around. We have like grocery stores, like Dollar General, Family Dollar, or whatever, you know. They can only do so much. I mean, because if the water comes, they can't even open up, so. You can't get nowhere. If you don't have anything already prepared, or whatever, and the flood comes and you can't get out, then you're just stuck in the house. You can get nowhere. We got a couple of restaurants. And the water comes up here when it comes up downtown. We got a couple of restaurants downtown right down by the water. And that and when that comes up and stuff, we can't even get down there, they can't open up. So, I mean, they, they can't even help us. You know, we, you know, not less. We got to wait until the flood goes down, but they can't do anything to help us at that point. It gets to the point where they can't, they couldn't open up. Because when Sandy came, they couldn't open up, so we was fair game. We had to get up way past, Westover, Westover going to Princess Anne, if you wanted any, you know, like stores and restaurants and stuff like that.

Knorr: How would you say the businesses in Crisfield are doing, and would you like to see them maybe doing a little bit better, or how do you feel about that?

Fields: I would. I would like to see them doing a little bit better. But it's-it's hard, it's a competition going on right here now, because everyone wants to cook that same thing. So, I mean, it's- it's- it's just- it's just those little local restaurants that we have around here.

Knorr: Would you like to kind of see more like investment in the area of Crisfield? Would you have more restaurants?

Fields: Yeah, I would, because this, this area, I think this area is set up for that, for- for that because we don't have the seafood like we usually have. Which was, it was plentiful here. This town, this town was booming, but this place was always something going on. It was always traffic, it was always people coming in and going out. But now it's not like that anymore. They don't they don't have anything to come to here. If they come here, only thing they can come here is, they see a couple of restaurants, they close at 6 o'clock [cell phone rings] They close up at 6 o'clock. [pauses] They close up at 6 o'clock. And then you've got to go home, and so they don't have nothing else to do. Go ahead.

Ottey: So would you say maybe the industries in Crisfield and like the restaurants and all that, would you say that they definitely have their better seasons, like maybe over the summer, they're a bit more popular, you get more tourists coming down here, than compared to like the, the winter and the fall or?

Fields: Yeah, I mean in the summertime, I mean now in the summer, well back then in the summertime it was big, it would be booming here all the day about four or five crab houses that were open and the women were working, the men, everybody was working, people coming down here watching, you know. Tourists would come down here to watch them pick crabs and, you know, they had a lot to do back then, but now they don't have anything, anything like that now for the tourists to come down here to see. I don't see it. I don't see it. They don't have anything, well, for the tourists to come.

Knorr: Kind of speaking on that a little bit, how do you entertain yourself in Crisfield then? Are there like community events that you go to or, you know, how do you, entertain yourself?

Fields: Who, me? Well, I'm a member of an organization, Elks organization, IVPEOW. I'm the member of that, I'm a daughter for that even, for that particular building. And I, you know, I do a lot of stuff, we do a lot of stuff for the community, but I- I- I entertain myself, we go down there, we have dances and stuff. We have an organization we have coming up next week. We have a parade and all that kind of stuff. I mean, everybody likes, they like that, so lot people in the community goes to that. They don't have a lot, so the guy over here has a crab place over here, he has cruises over here. The crab feast is in the summertime. It's starts in, it's going to start exactly in May. Around, probably around the end of May, like Memorial Day weekend. And they have a crab feast and boat ride every week from May all the way up to, I guess, September, October. That's where people that into that, that wants to do that. A lot of people come in town for that. But then after they, you know, after they leave, and it's over with, and they probably don't want to go back, they don't really have anywhere to go if they want to go out, you know, later on to, you know, head for the party or whatever they want to do, you know, but we try to open up our building to in case they want to come out, they're not ready to go in or something like that, we'll open up our building for them to come in. There's not a lot of- it's not a lot of stuff right here to do. There's no movies, nothing for entertainment, you know. It's nothing really right here for the kids to do, you know.

Ottey: Yeah, so speaking, I guess, going back to the youth for a minute, is that something that you can see Crisfield improving on? Maybe making those places for the youth to, you know, kind of go out and do things?

Fields: I would like to see it. I really would like to see it. I just don't, I just don't, I would, I would love to see something come here for the youth in Crisfield. Because they need it, because they're straying away and they're getting into all kinds of trouble, because they don't have anything to do. They don't have anything to do to occupy their time, except a little basketball. If you don't have anybody that's willing to sit and work with the kids that like to play basketball, because everybody doesn't play basketball. So, you know. We don't have a tennis court, we don't have nothing, we don't have none of, none of that, you know, not here.

Ottey: Yeah, so also with the youth, maybe after they graduate high school, you know, where do they go? Do they kind of stay here or do they go to different places?

Fields: I think some of them go to college. You might have a few that might go into armed forces or, you know, but more than likely some of them just don't, they don't, when they graduate from college, they just go try to get a job in McDonald's or they don't do nothing. I mean, like we don't try to push them to do something to better themselves, then they're not going to do it. I have a 19-year-old granddaughter that described when she was, she was in South Carolina. She's here with me because she thinks she needs to come here and take care of me. And so, she's here with me right now, but she's really trying to find herself a job, you know, while she's here with, you know, with me. And it's kind of hard because they don't have a lot in Crisfield to offer. But she doesn't, I mean, well, she's got her license now, so we're going to try to get her a car so she can drive. She probably can go far, like Salisbury, somewhere to get a job. There's nothing around here as far as jobs-wise except for Food Lion, Family Dollar, Dollar General. Maybe a couple of restaurants may hire a couple people, whatever. But it's not a lot, right, for the kids to do, or for, as far as work.

Ottey: So there's not really a good place for the youth maybe like after they graduate high school to invest a career in Crisfield.

Fields: Not to me.

Ottey: Yeah, it's been kind of a trend with some of our interviews when we discuss the youth, where it's, you know, there's just not a lot of jobs here in Crisfield.

Fields: It's not, it's not a lot of jobs here. I work at the school program, It Takes a Village, and they have to do it themselves. They have, she has a program called- called Shorewood College for kids, you know, they starting in ninth grade. They can try to prepare them to go to college. It's a good program. But the kids don't want to get involved, they don't wanna. If you don't push them, they not gonna, if the parents don't push them then they're not gonna, you know. And it's a good program because they take them around, they take them to colleges and different colleges and stuff so they can see what's going on. You know, take them on, you know, on field trips and stuff, and they, and they, I don't know, I can't even say it's the kids, it's their parents. I had to say, I didn't have the opportunity when I was coming up. You know, those- those kind of programs stuff, I didn't have that. I quit school when I was 15 years old because I got pregnant. But then, you know, after I had my kids and stuff, I went back to school and got my education. It was hard, but I went by and got it, but these kids, I mean, the opportunities are out there, but they just don't, the parents won't push them to, you know. And if we don't have a couple people, like in, that work in the school system that, you know, especially black people. I'm saying it because it is the black youth that's not willing to help them to try to get them where they need to be, you know, what I mean? They're just, they're lost, they're just lost.

Ottey: So do you think the education system around Crisfield also plays a role into that, into kind of pushing the youth?

Fields: Because you know, I don't see, I don't see. To me, I- I- I'm watching it as the generations changes. And I listen. I have like little teeny nieces and nephews and stuff that's going to school, and I asked them yesterday, my niece, she's got some Ds on her report card or something. And I said, "Well, what's, what's wrong? What are you doing?" She said, "Something is wrong." She said, "Because I usually get A's, I used to get all A's. And I just don't understand, I just don't understand it." I said, "Well, ask the teacher." "She tells me to go figure it out." But that's not good. That's not, and that's- that's going to make the child even worse because she said, "Well, she don't even care whether I get it or not. She's just gonna put this big D on my report card." And well, you know, this- this parent, my niece, my- her mom is not going for that. She's going to be at that school on the morning, I'm gonna tell you. We might have to go get her out of jail or something, but she's not gonna put, but I'm just saying, you do have some parents that will push the issue as to try to get the help that the kids need. But it's just sad. This, this, the generation now that's working in school and stuff, I don't know if, I don't know why they're there. I don't know if they're just there because they got a degree in teaching and they're just there because they can get a job. Or are they really, really interested in helping the- helping the youth?

Knorr: You kind of spoke about you having kids and everything. How was growing, or not growing, how was raising your children in Crisfield and everything? And then you kind of spoken on the system a little bit. It seems like you're maybe more on top of it than other families have spoken. But how was raising your children in Crisfield?

Fields: Well, for me, it was okay because I had that family support. My mom was there and my dad, my stepfather was there to help me, help me with my kids back then. But the first one, I had the second one. But the third one, I was on my own. But then I had, I had matured enough to know what my responsibility and what I had to do, because I was young. I was 15 years old when I had my first child, so I didn't know any, I mean, I knew that I had a responsibility that I had to take care of. But it was a little bit better for me back then than it is now for- for a child probably my age, or probably never, now they have a children at 12, 13 years old. So it's kind of hard, I think, for them because they don't know anything, because they're still babies themselves. So I had family support, so it was not that hard for me.

Knorr: It kind of ties into what you're saying about the connection to Crisfield, maybe-

Fields: Yeah.

Knorr: -how your family's here. We've heard a lot about that from interviewees talking about what they've loved most about Crisfield is their family, or if not their direct family, the community that has created a family-

Fields: Yeah.

Knorr: -you said that?

Fields: It was. We were, we were all like one. I mean, we were just like, it was a family. Even though we weren't related, some of us weren't related, you know. We were, you know, we all, that's how we grew up.

Knorr: Would you say you also see that in some of the—kind of slightly changing gears here—would you say that you see that and some of like the damage aspect like once, like after Sandy was there a big community kind of coming together and trying to help each other out after Sandy and...?

Fields: Yeah, they did that. They really did do that. They did come together and try to help each other after- after that storm came. They- they- they really did. They really stepped up. Crisfield, Crisfield really did what they were supposed to do.

Knorr: Was there, a lot of people have talked about Sandy, but are there any other major flooding or storming events that you kind of vividly remember as like-

Fields: No.

Knorr: No, you're saying?

Fields: No. A lot of storms they talked about, I was probably little, too little to remember, you know. And so I, you know, I just knew a couple ones that came. Oh, Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane, I can't say, another hurricane that came before that, but it wasn't as bad. There was another hurricane that came, but it was not as bad as Sandy. I do know that.

Ottey: So I guess maybe recently for these, I guess these nuisance flooding events, how do you see, or I guess does the community still kind of come together in the same way? I know not to the same extent as they would have with Sandy because that's- that was a much more intense event, but from like I guess day-to-day flooding, more of your issues with like daily flooding, do you see the community coming together on that a whole lot?

Fields: Not really, no, because it's not the intense, I don't think. It's just that, you know, it just, you know, they don't come together like that.

Knorr: Would you say it's almost become, I don't want to say anything for you, but would you say it's sort of become a way of life in Crisfield with like the flooding events and things that's just become sort of...?

Fields: You say what?

Knorr: I said I didn't want to say, I didn't speak for you in a sense, but would you say that maybe that the flooding events and the frequency has just sort of become a way of life?

Fields: Yeah.

Knorr: Like some interviewees have been-

Fields: It is.

Knorr: Like it's just how it is-

Fields: It is just a way of life.

Knorr: Yeah.

Fields: It is a way of life in Crisfield, because it's always been here. I mean, the flooding and tide has always, has always been in Crisfield. It's never not. It's always been, flooding has always been in Crisfield, always. But it was never as bad as what it was when Sandy came. I mean, you know, the tide, the water comes up, it comes up. But like you said, the other storm that came, I was too young to remember, so. And they say water was everywhere then, but say I was too young remember that, so I don't know anything about that. But my, you know, my grandparents or whatever before me, you know, they- they knew about it. All I know, I was little, and I was in the house somewhere, and they probably, back then, they probably couldn't even get anywhere. They could- probably couldn't get out of the houses. They had to deal with that water and stuff until it went down or whatever back then. But then, you know, we had an opportunity to get out before, you know.

Knorr: Maybe after Sandy or it sounds like luckily nothing too terrible, but have you had to make any like major repairs or small repairs in your home post any of these major floods or anything?

Fields: Yeah. Wound up getting a new house. I couldn't even live in my house. I could not live in my house. I could not even stand [inaudible]. When the storm was over, the tide started coming down. We went to the house to see what was going on. It could not be lived, live in that house. See, my house was lower to the ground, because it was an old house. It was- was my grandparents' house. It was lower than the ground. And my mom's house, believe it or not, she stayed on this side. I stayed on that side. So when the water came and the Sandy came, it all came on my side, and not, it came on her side too, but it only went as far as her porch. It didn't even really, really come into her house like this. I wound up having to getting a new house and had to raise it up off the ground.

Knorr: When you got the new house, did you ever think about relocating up a little bit north out of some of these or you always wanted to stay in that community?

Fields: I'm always thinking about relocating all the time. All the time, but I just decided to stay because my parents, my mom was here. But my mom's going to pass away now, so. But I'm still here, because I got an uncle here. And I got a- one aunt left here. So I'm, you know. My daughter wants me to come down North Carolina with her, so I don't know what I might do.

Knorr: Have you-

Fields: But this is always going to be home, so.

Knorr: Have- have you seen any of your, like, neighbors or friends consider relocating or even relocate or?

Fields: I haven't seen nobody be look like everybody stand right where they put. Because a lot of older, you know, lot of older people, they're not trying to do that. They're not trying to move away, I'm telling you, they're not. Me, I got a different mindset, I can go anywhere. Beause I've always been that type of person, I'll try and experience once, I try something once. I mean, you know, if I don't like it, I come on back home, you now. That's the only thing about it. If you go, if you go, if we have, or you have, you're already rooted somewhere. And then if we go and you try to, you know, you try to make a change or whatever, if you don't like it, you can always come back home. I've always had that mindset. You can always come back home. Long as you got somewhere to live when you get here, but I believe that's how it is. But a lot of people, older people had that mind set, they're not going anywhere. They're not, they're going to stay right here as long as they can stay, so.

Ottey: So have you seen, maybe, any kids come back from, maybe they graduate high school, go off to college, and then they maybe try and come back here and?

Fields: You said what, you said, if the what?

Ottey: Yeah, so this is kind of going back to the youth, but would you say that, or have you seen any kids, you know, graduate high school from Crisfield and then go to college somewhere and then, I guess, bring their knowledge back to Crisfield and try and- try and help out in Crisfield?

Fields: Not many, not many. I knew, I knew of- of Mayor Darlene Taylor, you know, she- she graduated from here and went to college and lived in D.C. All them years. She came back and she moved, she started this program, It Takes a Village. After school program to help, you know, to try to help the youth. She said, like, she had children too and they didn't have anything to do and nowhere to go. So she started this program to- to try to better and, you know, try to have something for the young kids to do. She's the one that came back and stayed and went to college and came back and brought her what she knew here. So, she's one, and that is not too many that I know of.

Knorr: Are there any projects or events that have excited you or kind of concerned you about like what the city or the state has been doing for flooding or just maybe the development of Crisfield in general?

Fields: Well, I know they were trying to work on it, trying to work on the flooding thing. That's a good thing. But now that the funding has, I mean, they've lost a lot of funding and stuff. I don't know what's going to happen now, but...

Knorr: Yeah, so kind of maybe in like a weird limbo state where-

Fields: Yeah.

Knorr: You know, it's hard to tell what's going to happen.

Fields: You know-

Knorr: Yeah.

Fields: It's hard to tell when you try and get grants and stuff, and that's- that's the problem. That's how, you know, some stuff that's got done in Crisfield is through grants and stuff, and it's, and it's really hard right now, because Trump's cutting out everything, so I don't know what, I mean what's going to happen, you know.

Ottey: So are you yourself involved at all in any community or city events that kind of actively plan around flooding or trying-

Fields: No, no-

Ottey: to make decisions on flooding?

Fields: I don't have time to deal with the children. That's all I can do. I can't do a whole bunch of events and stuff, but I just deal, deal, I do a lot of stuff dealing with children, helping with children and stuff at this point. I can't do no two or three things at one time. I got enough, children are enough on the plate forever. I'm telling you, I- I- I work with 60-some kids every day, and that's enough. When I go home at 5 o'clock, I'm not thinking about a club meeting or nothing. I just want to go home and sit down, you know. But if I- if I wasn't doing that, I probably would be more involved in different stuff. But right now, my plate is full with those 60-some children.

Ottey: Yeah, no, that's very understandable.

Fields: But I do, I mean, I will go to a meeting or something sometime if I, you know, like if the city has a meeting on something like flooding or something dealing with Crisfield. If I'm available, I will go to the meeting. To see what's going, and talk to us.

Ottey: So if it's like a meeting where they want community input.

Fields: Yeah, I will go, I will go to that.

Knorr: And you feel your voice is, if you were to share your opinion or voice, the city, you'd say, does a pretty good job of listening to what the people want and responding?

Fields: Yeah, they do, and they say it.

Knorr: When you say you work with like the 60 children, is that with the It Takes a Village program? Is that with you?

Fields: Absolutely.

Knorr: Yeah.

Fields: It's a good program. It's spreading, it's spreading. [pauses]

Knorr: Would you say that with kind of programs like that and continuing kind of the youth investment in Crisfield that you- you'd be hopeful for the City of Crisfield moving forward in like the next 20 years and everything?

Fields: I would, but I would- I would love to see it. I would, I think it would be. But at this point now, I just think this is just a- it'll be a nice tourist town, that's a tour, but there's not a whole lot here, but if they will put some stuff here, I think Crisfield will thrive again, really thrive again. I think it's- I think it's more of the location and- and the population. It's got a whole lot of stuff, I think.

Ottey: Yeah, we've kind of heard.

Fields: I don't know, I don't know for sure, but I'm just- just my thinking.

Ottey: Yeah, we've kind of heard from previous interviews that Crisfield's more of a popular place for people to come here and retire than it is-

Fields: Yeah-

Ottey: For youth to come and find-

Fields: Yeah.

Ottey: A career or find a path for them to take, so.

Fields: That's what it's for, to come here to retire. That's what they want, to get away from the city life. They just want to just come and walk down the street or take your dog for a walk or go into the park or something like that, you know.

Knorr: Do you see Crisfield moving more in that direction of, kind of like, kind of like the escape from the city life and like the peaceful calmness, or would you like to see more, a little bit more of like that robust, more jobs, more youth kind of things popping up like that, what?

Fields: I would like to see, I would like to see more jobs and stuff for the youth, I mean, I really would, because I think they- they could make a difference if they had something they could look forward to doing a lot. They don't have anything to look forward to. And the only job they could probably get, like I said, is at McDonald's or Food Lion or a couple of restaurants or whatever, and- and you got the two stores, Dollar General, Family Dollar, I mean, they don't, you know? It's just a wash.

Knorr: Yeah, it's not much there.

Fields: Not much. And you know, sometimes, like me, I wouldn't want my child- my child to graduate from high school and just come, just go, and just work at Dollar General or Family Dollar or Food Lion. I mean, it is all right for a little summer thing. I mean, it is alright if you go, if you go to, if you got a car, you go college, go to Wor-Wic or Salisbury, you don't drive. I mean, you don't stay on campus or nothing like that. And you want to do that as a part-time job, which is fine, you know. But I think, you know. It's got to be better, it's got to be something better for the young people, for real. The older people are just set in their ways and- and they're not going anywhere. So, we got to work with that, they're going anywhere, they want to stay put. They don't care if the tide comes all the way up to their neck, they're going to stay. If they- if they can get back in their homes or whatever, they are going to be fine. They just content. I think if you, some of them, if you take them away from here, they might not survive, because they're not used to that kind of activity, so.

Ottey: And I guess that goes back to what you were saying about not a whole lot of people really wanting to relocate-

Fields: Right.

Ottey: -or move in?

Fields: They're not. [pauses]

Knorr: Sort of another, this question always gets answered differently every time, but do you feel that climate change is something that people in Crisfield actively and, actively discuss and plan for, or is that something that?

Fields: I don't think so. I've never really, you know, that's something I've never even thought about honestly.

Knorr: Do you think people are ever apprehensive about it or is it kind of go back to the mindset a little bit of like, "It's just the- the way it is here"?

Fields: Yep, that's how they feel. That's the way it is here, so. [pauses]

Ottey: So we're coming up on 40 minutes here, so I guess try and maybe wrap up some few questions here. The last few questions here are very broad and open-ended, but...so I guess from, from your experience, would you just recommend Crisfield as a place to live?

Fields: Would I recommend Crisfield? Yeah, I- I would, because I like Crisfield, I- I mean, I would, I would, if you were older.

Ottey: Yeah, I understand.

Fields: I wouldn't recommend it for the young ones, but I would for the older ones, you know, because it's more, it's more of their speed, I think, too. I mean, older ones to come, you know, but not the younger ones to come. I wouldn't recommend that.

Knorr: We've heard that a few times from a couple people there.

Ottey: Yeah.

Knorr: Like, you know, it's definitely. Was there any time that you would have recommended, was there any time in the past that you've recommended people to move to Crisfield, or are you more?

Fields: Oh yeah.

Knorr: Yeah?

Fields: Yeah, that was when it was booming, yeah. Everybody loved Crisfield and the people. When I when I was, I guess, like 20-something years old and people would come and visit, they said, "Oh, we just love it here. We just love it. We would love to move here." I said, "Come on, move here, you know, move here." That was then. I don't know if they moved here or not. I'm just, you know, but a lot of people, a lot older people are moving, are moving in Crisfield, I didn't even know. It's- it's because this little town here, you knew everybody knew everybody. Now, I, there's people here I don't even know. I'm trying to figure out where they came from, you know, but they're older people. They've moved here, you know, because I don't venture out much, so I don't know what's going on by standing in the store. You know, the people come, they come to the grocery store, they're coming. Some people come from plain Pocomoke to go to the

Food Lion or Princess Anne, you know, to go to Food Lion, so I don't know that they're here just shopping or if they're moving here or they're staying here, so. But there's some people here, some older people here that's been moved here.

Fields: So, since you- since you grew up in Crisfield, I kind of want to go back to maybe what kind of jobs did you do when you were growing up in Crisfield, was?

Fields: Me?

Ottey: Yeah.

Fields: I used to work in a crab house. That's what I did, I was, you know. Our parents put us in the crab house, and that's what we had to do. I worked in a crab house. Couldn't stand picking crabs. But I liked working with the soft shell crabs. So I went from the crab house to the South Shore crab place. So that's I did when I was coming up. I didn't get a chance to work like in the grocery store or something like that. So our parents, our parents we got up at a certain age, we had to get up when they got up early in the morning, five or six o'clock in the morning to go to the crab house, we had to go too, and that's how we earned our little bit money to buy our stuff buy our school clothes and stuff like that, so we had to go to work. These kids now, they don't have to go to work. Their parents don't make them go to work. It's a whole lot different than what it was when I was young. [pauses]

Ottey: And I guess would you say that's also what most of your friends also did growing up?

Fields: Yeah.

Knorr: Before you, what job did you do while you were in Crisfield for the most of the time though, was there anything you had done for the majority of your time?

Fields: Oh, yeah, I worked at, they had a fish, called Mrs. Paul's Kitchen. It was a place that did seafood, like fish steaks and stuff like that. I worked over there until they closed up, and I worked Rubberset, [inaudible] Sherwin-Williams paintbrushes.

Knorr: And like you said, now you help with the after-school program for the- the kids and everything.

Fields: That's what I did, I worked at, I- I went to the Somerset Community Services in Marion. That's one with adults with disabilities. I worked up there and I retired from there. I was going to retire, I was going to take care of my mom because she had got sick, but then she passed away, but I was already retired then, so then I went down there and started working for It Takes a Village, so I came out of retirement and I had to help her with the kids.

Knorr: What wisdom would you share with the future generations of Crisfield if you had any?

Fields: Oh Lord, I don't know, I would- I would tell them to- to try and further their careers, further their careers, find something that they want to do, and maybe come back home and try to help some people here that need help, you know. That's all I can give them right now. Because I don't know what this generation is going to do, you just don't know what. The generations are changing now all the time, so you don't what. You want to give or what to expect out of us. I just try to instill in my grandkids that we want them to do better and make better decisions and better choices and stuff. And it's opportunities I hear that they just have to work their mind out. They can't lay around here and not get it. So I would like to see it, to see that happen, would like to see them all go to college or wherever they want to go. Maybe they might want the military or something like that. Just try to make themselves better. [pauses]

Ottey: Alright, well, I have no more follow-up questions.

Knorr: Yeah. There's--this will be stored in the NABB Center so it'll be kind of like a piece of living history. If there's anything else you'd like to include that we didn't talk about on the City of Crisfield, feel free to right now if not we're.

Fields: Crisfield, it's a great place. It really is a great place. There's just not enough opportunities here for it. I'm older now, so it doesn't really bother me, but it's not, it's just not enough opportunities here for the young people. That's- that's my concern, you know. But Crisfield's a great place. Always has been a great place. I've been there for 67 years.

Knorr: Okay, well, I think we're done.

Ottey: Yeah, I guess that wraps it all up then.

Knorr: Yeah, thank you.

Ottey: Thank you so much.

[Transcript ends]